

understand they are now going to offer aid; they're sending ships into the Mediterranean. Are they ready for a fight?

The President. I don't believe so. I believe that—as I said before and I'll say again, one of the unfortunate side effects of this whole crisis—and we saw it a little bit in Bosnia, but we were able to resolve it, thank goodness, in Bosnia in a way that brought us together with the Russians in the peace-keeping force there—is that this whole issue has put great strains on the domestic politics of Russia, in the Russian Duma, because of the religious and cultural identity and the ethnic identity of the Russians with the Serbs.

But I think that, based on my experience in dealing with this in the last few days, and my experience in dealing with the Russians over the last 6 years, and what appear to be the facts now, they are looking for ways to continue to oppose what NATO is doing, but to leave open the prospect that they could play a very constructive role in making a peace. I don't think anyone wants to see this conflict escalate, and I certainly don't believe the Russian Government does.

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:23 p.m. in the Briefing Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to President Slobodan Milosevic of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); the three U.S. Army infantrymen in custody in Serbia: Staff Sgt. Andrew A. Ramirez, Staff Sgt. Christopher J. Stone, and Specialist Steven M. Gonzales; and President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The President also referred to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Statement on Signing the Small Business Year 2000 Readiness Act

April 2, 1999

Today I am pleased to sign into law S. 314, the "Small Business Year 2000 Readiness Act."

In 9 months we will enter the new millennium. We have made tremendous progress in our efforts to address the Year 2000 (Y2K) computer problem. In spite of this progress, however, too many businesses, especially

small- and medium-sized firms, will not be ready unless they act immediately.

This week, the Small Business Administration (SBA), the Department of Commerce, the Department of Agriculture, and other Federal departments and agencies of the President's Council on Year 2000 Conversion are sponsoring "Small Business Y2K Action Week." At hundreds of Y2K seminars and training events across the country, these agencies are educating small businesses on the steps necessary for achieving Y2K compliance.

The message we are delivering to small businesses at these events is that every small business must take responsibility for making sure it is ready for the Year 2000 by taking action now. Every business should assess its exposure to the Y2K problem, ask its vendors and suppliers to be ready as well, and develop contingency plans in case its own critical systems or the systems of its vendors fail as we move into the Year 2000.

The legislation I am signing today will help ensure that the Nation's small businesses have access to the capital they need to be "Y2K-OK" in the Year 2000. The Act will authorize the SBA to provide loan guarantees for two Y2K purposes. First, it will enable small businesses to purchase the systems, software, equipment, and services necessary to become Y2K compliant. Second, it will assist small businesses that suffer economic injury as a result of the Y2K problem during the Year 2000. Authority for this special program will terminate on December 31, 2000.

I want to especially recognize the job that Administrator Aida Alvarez and the Small Business Administration have done in ensuring that the Nation's small business community is ready to meet the Y2K challenge. Through its leadership of Small Business Y2K Action Week, and its other extensive outreach efforts, the SBA has done an excellent job of raising the awareness of small businesses concerning the Y2K challenge. I would also like to thank the Congress for acting swiftly this session to ensure that we have this additional tool for assisting small businesses in their efforts to address this problem.

The Nation's small businesses are the backbone of our country's vibrant and growing economy. In signing S. 314 today, I hope to ensure that our small business community will move into the Year 2000 with minimal disruption to our Nation's economy.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
April 2, 1999.

NOTE: S. 314, approved April 2, was assigned Public Law No. 106-8. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Message on the Observance of Easter, 1999

April 2, 1999

Warm greetings to everyone celebrating Easter.

Today Christians across America and around the world commemorate with great joy the central mystery of their faith: the Resurrection of Jesus. In this season, we celebrate Christ's victory over sin and death, and we rejoice in the new life that He won for us through His suffering, death, and rising from the dead.

That new life empowers us to overcome sin and to recognize our capacity for forgiveness and love. We have seen in our own communities and in other nations across the globe the violence and human tragedy spawned by hatred, intolerance, and fear born of ignorance. If we are to destroy the roots of hatred, we must examine our own hearts and actions and learn what we can and must do to build just communities united in understanding and mutual respect. May this sacred season of renewal, hope, and new beginnings inspire our efforts and light our way to a brighter, more peaceful future.

Hillary joins me in extending best wishes for a blessed and joyous Easter celebration.

Bill Clinton

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

March 28

In the afternoon, the President went to Camp David, MD.

March 29

In the morning, the President returned to the White House, where he met with Chief of Staff John Podesta in the Oval Office. Later, he met with the foreign policy team and military leaders in the Oval Office concerning the situation in Kosovo.

The President announced the appointment of Robert A. Babbage, Jr., and Larry Echohawk as members of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

March 30

In the afternoon, the President met with President-elect Olusegun Obasanjo of Nigeria concerning a range of bilateral and regional issues.

In the evening, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom regarding the situation in Kosovo and the Northern Ireland peace process.

The President announced his intention to nominate John Hanson to be Assistant Secretary for Public and Intergovernmental Affairs at the Department of Veterans Affairs.

April 1

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom and Prime Minister Bertie Ahern of Ireland concerning the Northern Ireland peace process. Later, he met with the national security team in the Oval Office.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Norfolk, VA. While en route aboard Air Force One, he met with Defense Secretary William Cohen and Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Henry (Hugh) Shelton. Following his arrival at the Norfolk